

**Unit 2: New Kinds of Food Audioscript**  
**From Teacher's Pack, Contemporary Topics 1-3**

**TEACHER:** Hi, everybody... how's it going?... Good.... Has everyone 01turned in their homework? All righty, then let's get started. If you remember, last week we were discussing some research in the area of 02genetics. Today, I'd like to talk about something I'm sure you've all heard about—03genetically modified or "GM" food. Genetically modified food is food—either a plant or animal—that has been 04altered in the 05laboratory by scientists. The scientists take something from one plant or animal, and add it to a different plant or animal to make it grow 06in a different way. Today, we'll look at some of the 07benefits, and the 08possible risks, of genetically modified food.

Let's start with a 09discussion of some of the benefits of GM food. 10Genetic scientists are really trying to make food plants that are better than normal plants, to make plants that are altered in ways that make the plant 11grow better or 12taste better or 13be healthier to eat than normal plants.

One benefit is that genetically modified plants may need fewer 14pesticides than normal plants. For example, there is a type of 15corn that is bad for 16insects—when the insects eat the corn plant, they die. However, the corn doesn't 17hurt people. This type of corn is beneficial because farmers use fewer pesticides to grow the corn, and so there is less 18pollution in the 19environment. Also the corn is less 20expensive because the farmers don't have to spend a lot of 21money on 22pesticides. So, by using fewer pesticides, the corn is 23cheaper and the environment is 24cleaner.

Another 25benefit of genetically modified plants is that they may grow better than 26normal plants. One example is a type of genetically modified 27strawberry that can grow in cold weather. These are better than normal strawberries because farmers can plant the strawberries 28earlier in the spring and later in the fall, when normal strawberries usually die. So, as a result, farmers can grow many more strawberries than they used to. So that's another benefit—plants that grow better.

Finally, a third benefit is that many genetically modified plants stay 29fresh longer after they are 30harvested. So, for example, there is a kind of 31tomato that stays fresh 32in the store for 33about two months, instead of 34one or two weeks. This means that there is more time to get the food to the stores and that stores have more time to sell the food. 35Less food is thrown away and wasted. So it's a great benefit to have food that 36stays fresh longer—and we can 37consume more of the food we grow.

**TEACHER:** Now that we've looked at some of the benefits of genetically modified plants, let's talk about 38the risks of growing this type of food. We don't really know what the 39harmful effects are, but there are several things that people are worried about.

One 40risk is that the genetically modified plants may start to 41dominate the other 42wild plants in the environment. This is a problem with some types of tomatoes, for example. The new tomato plants are 43stronger than 44normal plants, and because they are stronger and grow faster than the wild plants, the genetically modified tomatoes may start to 45dominate the environment, causing the wild plants to die. So having one plant dominate all the other plants isn't good for 46the environment.

Another risk is that genetically modified plants will hurt 47wild animals and 48insects in the environment. For example, the genetically modified corn I mentioned earlier has already caused this 49problem. Now some 50butterflies that live near 51the corn are dying—butterflies that are good insects, and don't eat the corn. It's possible that corn is 52killing the butterflies somehow, but we're not sure. We just know that more butterflies are dying than 53normal. But clearly there's a risk that genetically modified foods can hurt animals and insects in the environment.

But probably the most 54important risk is that genetically modified food may be harmful to the 55people who 56consume the food. The 57alterations in the plants may cause 58serious problems for people—we just don't know. Scientists are trying all kinds of new things, such as putting the 59genes from animals into a plant. For example, to make a fruit like 60strawberries stay fresh longer, scientists took a gene from 61a fish—a gene that helps the fish live in 62cold water—and put that into a strawberry. Will that strawberry be harmful to people? We don't know. But it may be.

So it's clear that there are some important benefits to genetically modified food but also some risks—risks that a lot of people aren't willing to take. So let's stop here and discuss any questions you have at this point...

benefits	altered	be healthier	benefit	tomato
consume	butterflies	cheaper	cleaner	important
dominate the environment	corn	discussion	dominate	serious
fresh longer	earlier in the spring	environment	expensive	cold water
harmful effects	genetic scientists	genetically modified	grow better	the corn
in the store	harvested	hurt people	in a different way	turned in
laboratory	insects	insects	killing	people
normal plants	less food	money	normal	genes
pesticides	normal plants	one or two weeks	pesticides	the environment
risk	pollution	possible risks	problem	wild animals
taste better	stays	strawberry	stronger	consume
wild plants	alterations	a fish	the risks	strawberries

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Let's start with a **09**\_\_\_\_\_ of some of the benefits of GM food. **10**\_\_\_\_\_ are really trying to make food plants that are better than normal plants, to make plants that are altered in ways that make the plant **11**\_\_\_\_\_ or **12**\_\_\_\_\_ or **13**\_\_\_\_\_ to eat than normal plants.

One benefit is that genetically modified plants may need fewer **14**\_\_\_\_\_ than normal plants. For example, there is a type of **15**\_\_\_\_\_ that is bad for **16**\_\_\_\_\_—when the insects eat the corn plant, they die. However, the corn doesn't **17**\_\_\_\_\_. This type of corn is beneficial because farmers use fewer pesticides to grow the corn, and so there is less **18**\_\_\_\_\_ in the **19**\_\_\_\_\_. Also the corn is less **20**\_\_\_\_\_ because the farmers don't have to spend a lot of **21**\_\_\_\_\_ on **22**\_\_\_\_\_. So, by using fewer pesticides, the corn is **23**\_\_\_\_\_ and the environment is **24**\_\_\_\_\_.

Another **25**\_\_\_\_\_ of genetically modified plants is that they may grow better than **26**\_\_\_\_\_. One example is a type of genetically modified **27**\_\_\_\_\_ that can grow in cold weather. These are better than normal strawberries because farmers can plant the strawberries **28**\_\_\_\_\_ and later in the fall, when normal strawberries usually die. So, as a result, farmers can grow many more strawberries than they used to. So that's another benefit— plants that grow better.

Finally, a third benefit is that many genetically modified plants stay **29**\_\_\_\_\_ after they are **30**\_\_\_\_\_. So, for example, there is a kind of **31**\_\_\_\_\_ that stays fresh **32**\_\_\_\_\_ for **33**\_\_\_\_\_, instead of **34**\_\_\_\_\_. This means that there is more time to get the food to the stores and that stores have more time to sell the food. **35**\_\_\_\_\_ is thrown away and wasted. So it's a great benefit to have food that **36**\_\_\_\_\_ fresh longer—and we can **37**\_\_\_\_\_ more of the food we grow.

**TEACHER:** Now that we've looked at some of the benefits of genetically modified plants, let's talk about **38**\_\_\_\_\_ of growing this type of food. We don't really know what the **39**\_\_\_\_\_ are, but there are several things that people are worried about.

One **40**\_\_\_\_\_ is that the genetically modified plants may start to **41**\_\_\_\_\_ the other **42**\_\_\_\_\_ in the environment. This is a problem with some types of tomatoes, for example. The new tomato plants are **43**\_\_\_\_\_ than **44**\_\_\_\_\_, and because they are stronger and grow faster than the wild plants, the genetically modified tomatoes may start to **45**\_\_\_\_\_, causing the wild plants to die. So having one plant dominate all the other plants isn't good for **46**\_\_\_\_\_.

Another risk is that genetically modified plants will hurt **47**\_\_\_\_\_ and **48**\_\_\_\_\_ in the environment. For example, the genetically modified corn I mentioned earlier has already caused this **49**\_\_\_\_\_. Now some

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**50** \_\_\_\_\_ that live near **51** \_\_\_\_\_ are dying—butterflies that are good insects, and don't eat the corn. It's possible that corn is **52** \_\_\_\_\_ the butterflies somehow, but we're not sure. We just know that more butterflies are dying than **53** \_\_\_\_\_. But clearly there's a risk that genetically modified foods can hurt animals and insects in the environment.

But probably the most **54** \_\_\_\_\_ risk is that genetically modified food may be harmful to the **55** \_\_\_\_\_ who **56** \_\_\_\_\_ the food. The **57** \_\_\_\_\_ in the plants may cause **58** \_\_\_\_\_ problems for people—we just don't know. Scientists are trying all kinds of new things, such as putting the **59** \_\_\_\_\_ from animals into a plant. For example, to make a fruit like **60** \_\_\_\_\_ stay fresh longer, scientists took a gene from **61** \_\_\_\_\_—a gene that helps the fish live in **62** \_\_\_\_\_—and put that into a strawberry. Will that strawberry be harmful to people? We don't know. But it may be.

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